

# Blue Grouse and Shallots

By Tom Dickson

Preparation Time: 10 min. | Cooking Time: 50 min. | Serves: 4–6



*I've slightly reduced the cooking time in this recipe, which originally called for chicken thighs, to account for the drier meat of game birds. Pheasant breasts work well, too.*

**Note:** *If you have just one grouse or pheasant, cut the ingredients to one-third of what's listed here and reduce the cooking times by half.*

## INGREDIENTS

- 6 bone-in blue grouse breasts  
(from three birds)
- 4 T. flour
- 1 T. kosher salt
- 1 T. ground black pepper
- 6 T. unsalted butter
- 12 to 15 whole medium shallots\*, peeled
- 2 c. white wine
- 2 T. Dijon mustard
- 2 sprigs fresh tarragon (or 2 t. dried)
- 2 c. cherry tomatoes, halved

\*These smaller, tastier, and milder relatives of the onion cost a bit more than onions but are well worth the price.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Rinse the grouse breasts in water and pat very dry with paper towels. In a shallow bowl, mix salt, pepper, and flour. Dredge the breasts in the seasoned flour.
2. Melt 3 T. butter in a large, heavy-bottomed pot or skillet set over medium-high heat. When the butter foams, cook the grouse, in batches if necessary, until well browned. Set aside.
3. Add remaining butter to pot and heat to foaming. Add the whole shallots to the pot and sauté until they soften and caramelize, approximately 10 minutes. Add the wine to deglaze the pot, stirring with a large spoon, then add the mustard and tarragon, then the grouse breasts. Cover the pot, turn the heat to low, and simmer for 10 minutes.
4. Remove the lid and allow the sauce to reduce and thicken, about 15 minutes.
5. Add the cherry tomatoes to the pot, stir lightly to combine, and serve immediately with crusty bread (to soak up the sauce) or over mashed potatoes.

**L**ike many hunting dog owners, I'm counting down the days to the upland bird opener. But unlike most, I won't be heading to the prairie in search of Huns and sharpies. My wire-haired pointing griffon puppy struggles in hot weather, panting and seeking shade when temperatures exceed 75 degrees. And I'm afraid that she or my springer will be bitten by a rattlesnake, even though I've put both through the ordeal of "snake break" clinics, which use a defanged rattler and several zaps from a shock collar to, in theory, scare them away from anything that slithers.

So it's off to the mountains for me and the dogs to hunt blue grouse and maybe a ruffed grouse or two.

That's fine by me. I'm not much of an elk hunter (too much work), so chasing mountain grouse gives me a chance to roam the high country with gun in hand when the air is clean and sweet. And because it's cooler and holds more water than the parched prairie, the dogs seem to like it better there.

Then there's the blue grouse themselves, which hold readily for a point (this I know only from hearsay, having never shot one that way), offer challenging hillside shots (this I have done), and taste better in the pot than any other upland species except the equally delectable ruffed grouse (as I and many others will attest).

A friend roasts his plucked blue grouse whole in the oven, dabbing the browning skin with melted butter like it's a little holiday turkey. That's a great way to go, but I prefer a little more flavor with my bird. That's why I recommend this easy, delicious, one-pot recipe that ran in the *New York Times* last year. It originated with Martha Stewart and was revised by Rishia Zimmern of Edina, Minnesota, wife of TV cooking celebrity Andrew Zimmern. 🐾

—Tom Dickson is editor of *Montana Outdoors*.